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ABSTRACT

This series, designed for use in inservice teacher workshops, addresses the question, "How do children and teachers use language to get things done?" The transcribed classroom discourse presented and discussed in each volume illustrates functional language in a real context based on the videotaping of undoctored classroom events from kindergarten and grades 1 to 3. Each manual contains workshop exercises to be used with the videotape, describes the theoretical framework from which the work stems, and includes verbal transcripts of the language used in the tapes. The present volume explores the use of question-asking strategies in the classroom. Functions of questions beyond merely obtaining information are dealt with. Children are shown to have a variety of ways of using questions. It is suggested that educators can make use of knowledge of this variety for preservice and inservice training. The videotape depicts several child-child interactions that involve a number of questions. (Author/JB)

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WHAT'S WHAT WITH QUESTIONS

Participant's Manual

Ceil Kovac
Stephen R. Cahir

EXPLORING FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE
Stephen R. Cahir, Series Coordinator

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FOREWORD

Exploring Functional Language is a unique set of materials that addresses what is probably the most important question one could ask about language use in the schools: "How do children and teachers use language to get things done?" However obvious such a question may seem, it is unfortunately true that we seldom ask it. Instead, the schools usually try to determine such questions as "How correct is the usage of the children?" or "How mature is the children's language development in terms of pronunciation or grammar?" These are not unimportant questions, but they focus only on the *forms* of language rather than on its *functions*. That is, the questions address the social judgments we can make about language (is it correct or not) rather than the cognitive functions (what does the language get done).

These protocol tapes and manuals effectively illustrate functional language in its real, classroom context with videotapes of the undoctored, actual classroom events. The manuals contain workshop exercises to be used with the videotape, describe (in clear language) the theoretical framework from which the work stems, and include verbal transcripts of the language used in the tapes. All videotape samples (15 to 20 minutes in length) were taken from a large research project conducted at the Center for Applied Linguistics (Peg Griffin and Roger Shuy, *Children's Functional Language and Education in the Early Years*, 1978). Separate manuals accompany each videotape.

A Way with Words describes the principle of functional language in some detail, calling into question conventional school language assessment which deals only with language forms (sounds, vocabulary and grammar) while often ignoring meaning relationships (semantics) and language use (pragmatics).

What's What with Questions explores the use of question asking strategies in the classroom. It points out that questions do a great deal more work than merely getting information. Children have a variety of ways to use questions and this protocol suggests ways that educators can make use of them for in-service or pre-service training. *It's Your Turn* provides information about the verbal and non-verbal aspects of classroom turns at talking, when it succeeds as well as when it breaks down. *Transitions: Activity between Activities* focuses on what has been conventionally considered "down time" by educators. The videotape and manual describe how transitions can function as an actual learning event, socially and cognitively. A similar focus is presented in *When Is Reading?*, which illustrates visually that learning how to read extends far beyond "official" reading time in classrooms. Although much of the focus of these videotapes and manuals is on children's functional language use, teacher talk is also noted, especially in *Teacher Talk Works*, a visible demonstration of talk that teaches, answers, evaluates, manages, and reprimands.

There is no way that a brief overview of this sort can capture the richness of the actual videotaped events in this series. That is precisely the reason, in fact, that the authors decided to present this important information in protocol form. These are *not* books about children's functional language. They *are* children's functional language, captured in natural, real life settings, selected from hundreds of hours of research samples and presented in a way which is convincing, clear and dynamic.

Roger Shuy

INTRODUCTION

☆ **How are questions involved in teaching and learning?**

☆ **Do people use questions just to get information?**

☆ **What other kinds of work do questions do?**

☆ **What are the different ways that children use questions?**

☆ **How will these materials help in the classroom situation?**

☆ **How are they relevant and applicable to elementary school teaching?**

The above are some of the questions that will be treated in these materials. This participant's manual is part of a packet that includes an instructor's manual and a videotape. The purpose of these materials is to explore certain concepts and facts about the language used in elementary school classrooms. The videotape results from a larger study examining children's use of language in school settings. Along with the transcript, it illustrates instances of children's classroom language usage in nursery school and first through third grades. Although the materials are intended for use in pre-service and in-service teacher training, they may be of interest to other audiences, including linguistics students and educational specialists.

Language's central role in education is clear, both as a means for transmitting information and as a tool in the development and evaluation of many educational skills. Our educational system depends upon language for content material, for the presentation and evaluation of teachers' knowledge of content material, and for the learning and displaying of content knowledge by children.

People use language as a tool to get things done. There are many activities that could not be accomplished without language, and often language provides special formulas for those activities. For instance, in many cultures people have to say special sentences to each other before they are considered married; babies are not considered christened until the appropriate person

says the right things; a bet is not a bet unless someone says "I bet you $5 that . . ." There are many other activities that depend on language, even though they may not have special language: people make requests, apologize, and condole with language. It might be said that the language very often reflects the task hand—as a matter of fact, the language and the task may be one and the same.

The tasks that need to be accomplished at school result in language that is different from what might be called "everyday conversation." For example, a teacher must frequently speak to many children at once; children must demonstrate their knowledge with language; teachers must respond to both acceptable and unacceptable answers to questions. In everyday conversation it might be strange for one adult to say to another "Alright, you may speak now," giving the other permission to speak. In a classroom this permission giving is usual and there are many ways of assigning turns-to-talk. While the participants in an everyday conversation do not usually evaluate overtly the contributions of others, evaluation is part of a teacher's job. So classroom language and everyday conversation do different kinds of work. The same might be said of legal language, medical language, sports language, and so forth. The point is that there is not just one kind of language: language is what the situation requires it to be.

It is important to understand how children and teachers use language. It is important to realize that children understand and use the conventions of classroom language. It is important to reflect upon the depth and breadth of the knowledge they display effortlessly. It is important to question whether some classroom problems may be explained in terms of a discrepancy between classroom language and the child's home language. It is important to see that while a child might be negatively evaluated on the basis of "ineffective language usage," the problem might revolve around the need to develop a particularly critical classroom language skill, such as being able to request a repetition or a clarification.

These materials have been prepared with the view that learning how to teach includes learning about the language of teachers and students. The videotape provides instances of children in real classrooms. The written materials are designed to point out some of the fundamental characteristics of language used in school and to give teachers a way to explore the language in their own classrooms. The importance of learning by seeing and doing is stressed here. Finally, with an appreciation for how busy and hectic the life of an elementary school teacher can be, we suggest that the teacher does not always have to leave the classroom to study or do research.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THESE MATERIALS

The discussion and exercise sections of this manual are designed to be flexible and interchangeable, to accommodate individual learning styles, time schedules, and your own goals.

If you are a participant using this manual in pre-service or in-service training, your instructor will plan a workshop based on these materials. **If you are working on your own,** you may find either of the following approaches helpful or you may wish to devise one of your own.

The transcript reflects the contents of the videotape. Satisfactory work can be done with this manual when the videotape is not available.

OPTION A

(1) Read through the transcript. We suggest this as the first step for any approach, since it is often difficult to read while listening to and watching the tape at the same time.

(2) Look at the tape, if available.

(3) Read the discussion section.

(4) Read the "Theoretical Framework" section (strongly suggested though not necessary to complete the exercises).

(5) Do at least the following exercises:

I. Section A #1-3
Section B #1-3
Section C #1,2
Section D #1,2

II. General Exercises #1,2

(6) Do as many of the remaining exercises as possible, rereading the discussion section as appropriate or necessary.

OPTION B

(1) Read through the transcript.

(2) Look at tape, if available.

(3) Do the following exercises:

I. Section A #1-3
Section B #1-3
Section C #1,2
Section D #1,2

II General Exercises #1,2

(4) Read the discussion section.

(5) Read "Theoretical Framework" (strongly suggested).

(6) Do as many of the remaining exercises as possible, rereading the discussion section as appropriate or necessary.

DISCUSSION

This discussion section is intended mainly as a point of reference for persons participating in workshops or classes based on these materials; however, issues raised here also can serve as departure points for further discussion or as a basis for assignments.

THE MAIN IDEAS

Now that you have looked at the videotape or read through the transcript, it is useful to talk about the ideas developed on the tape and in the transcript. There are two basic issues:

- the functional and formal nature of questions: what they look like and what kinds of work they do, and
- the role of questions in teaching and learning.

What Questions Look Like

Most people would agree that questions are the primary way of getting information and that they are easily identifiable by their form. In many languages, including English, the form of the question reflects the kind of information that the speaker is trying to get. From that perspective, there are basically three kinds of questions:

(1) yes/no questions
  Is dinner ready?
  Do you sing well?
(2) information questions
  Who fixed dinner?
  What's for dinner?
(3) alternative questions
  Do you want coffee or tea?
  Is this the beginning or the end?

Even this small number of examples shows that not all questions are formed in the same way. We see, for example, that while the first two are both yes/no questions, one has *do* and one does not. In fact, the first question is an example of the simplest way to form a question in English, that is by re-arranging the subject and the verb. This is generally known as subject-verb inversion, and we see how a sentence like

  Dinner is ready.

can become the question

  Is dinner ready?

by subject-verb inversion. If that is the case, however, why does the sentence

You sing well.
yield the question
Do you sing well?
and not
Sing you well?

This is because there is a difference in English between verbs like *is, can, will, must,* or *shall* and hundreds of other verbs like *sing*. Verbs in the first (and relatively small) group can form yes/no questions simply by inversion of subject and verb. Verbs in the second group usually require the presence of *do* to form a yes/no question. We say "usually" because yes/no questions are not only characterized by structural changes such as subject-verb inversion or the addition of *do*. They may be marked by a rise in the speaker's voice, e.g.

Is dinner ready?

Do you sing well?

However, we have all heard yes/no questions in which the rising intonation is not accompanied by structural changes:

Dinner's ready?

You sing well?

Note that the intonation pattern for these last two examples, while rising, is *not* the same as the intonation in questions having structural changes. Furthermore, intonation also plays a role in differentiating yes/no questions from alternative questions. For example, one way to answer

Do you want coffee or tea? would be *yes* or *no*, while the answer to

Do you want coffee or tea? would be *coffee, tea,* or *neither*.

Information questions are typically marked by what are known as *WH* words—*who, when, why, where, what, how*. Some information questions are formed quite simply. For example, the sentence

Somebody fixed dinner.
becomes a question by substituting *somebody* with *who:*
Who fixed dinner?

In this instance the WH word is also the subject of the sentence. Let's consider another example in which the WH word affects the object of the sentence:

This is a carburetor.

One WH question that might be formed is

What is this?

Here the *what* is used for the object in the sentence. Since not all verbs behave like *is*, a WH question relating to the sentence

She bought a cake.

cannot be

What bought she?

rather than

What did she buy?

The sentence

What she did buy?

would also be unacceptable. The point is that we see both the addition of the past tense form of *do* and what is known as WH movement—that is, the movement of the WH word from the hypothetical position at the end of the declarative sentence (She bought what.) to the beginning. This applies to other WH words, as shown in the following examples:

She bought a cake *where*?	She bought a cake *when*?
Where did she buy a cake?	*When* did she buy a cake?
She bought a cake *why*?	She bought a cake *how*?
Why did she buy a cake?	*How* did she buy a cake?

WH questions are generally described as having falling intonation, as in

(1) Where are you going?

It is quite easy, however, to think of examples of WH questions that have rising intonation. Try saying the following sentences out loud:

(2) Where am I going?

(3) Where are you going?

It would seem that when a WH question has the function of obtaining some information, the intonation generally has the shape shown in example #1. The function of the last two utterances may not have to do with the getting of information. Question #2 could easily be the repetition of an information question, with the meaning "You're asking me where I'm going and I'm deciding how much of the information I want to give you." The third question could, in some contexts, be a directive or a statement meaning "Don't leave!" or "You don't have my permission to go."

What Questions Do

Thus far, we have been talking about questions used to get information. That, however, is only part of the story. When people talk to each other, more than simply an exchange of information takes place. People talk to each other *differently* depending on a number of factors. Those factors can be summarized as follows:

- relationship between speakers (e.g. a husband and wife vs. strangers)
- social or occupational status (e.g. the boss talking to an employee)
- age (e.g. a child addressing the teacher vs. a peer)
- sex (e.g. a woman addressing a man vs. another woman)
- place of conversation, setting (e.g. a classroom vs. a playground)

There are of course other factors that could be considered, such as the topic of conversation, but the point seems clear: There are many features in the social situation that affect the language of conversation. Now, how does all this affect questions? Basically, in two ways.

First, while people do use questions to get information, the most *direct* way (yes/no and WH question forms) sometimes may be considered inappropriate or even rude. There are different ways of getting just about the same information, as shown by

What time is it?
Time?
Could you tell me what time it is?
I wonder if you could tell me what time it is.
Do you have the time?

Consideration of the social factors listed previously might prompt a speaker to choose one form over another. Some of the examples here do not *look* like or *sound* like questions but can be used as a way of indirectly obtaining the same information that a direct question does.

Second, people use groups of words that *look* like questions and *sound* like questions to do other things. We mentioned that in some cases it might be considered rude to try to get information by the most direct method, that is by using a yes/no or WH question. By the same token, it may be inappropriate to try to get someone to *do* something by the most direct method, using a bare imperative. There are differences among the following utterances:

Gimme that knife!
Why don't you give me that knife?
Could you please give me that knife?
What do you think about letting me have that knife?

Speakers hearing these sentences contrasted would probably agree that the first is much more *direct* and that the situation would dictate which form the request or command might take.

As you can see, while some questions do have the job of getting information, other utterances that *look* like questions (WH word or word order) or *sound* like questions (rising intonation) are often used for purposes other than that of getting information. A question form may provide a polite or indirect way of *suggesting, advising,* or perhaps even *ordering* someone to do something. These observations about language may be summarized as follows:

(A) Question *forms* do not always have questioning *functions.*

(B) Questioning *functions* may be accomplished by other than questioning *forms.*

Contrasting Function and Form

This brings us to the issue of the contrast between the functional and formal aspects of language. The previous section showed how language in use varies depending on the social situation and how language as a *tool* allows speakers to accomplish a variety of tasks. For other instances, think of how a speaker may try to *convince* someone of an idea, *explain* something, or *solicit* a *comment* or *praise* for work completed. It is with language that these jobs of *convincing, explaining,* or *soliciting comment* or *praise* are done. Each of these tasks may be accomplished with different language forms, and the choice of form is related to language factors and social factors.

It is not enough for speakers of a language to know the sounds of the language or how those sounds form words and sentences. It is essential to recognize that language gets things done, and it is crucial to understand how the forms and functions are related. Look, for example, at the kind of contrast that a pair of simple sentences might reveal:

The coffee pot is in the cupboard.

vs.

Is that coffee pot full?

There are some sounds that are the same, some that are different; there are some identical words, some new ones; some words are in the same order (coffee pot), some are in a different order (*pot* and *is*). On some occasions both sentences may be hints for someone to make coffee, but on another occasion, the first may be just a statement of fact while the other is just a request for information.

Children's participation in conversations suggests that they are able to handle these sorts of contrasts long before they are exposed to any formal instruction about them. In fact, the way that children play with language very often betrays a sophisticated understanding of this relationship between form and function. Who hasn't heard a four-year-old, sitting near a sugar bowl, answer "yes" after being asked "Can you pass the sugar, dear?" The child is playing with the sentence form—a yes/no question—despite the fact that the situation shows the utterance as having the function of a directive (to pass the sugar).

Questions in Teaching and Learning

In school settings, both teachers and children use a wide variety of language forms to get things done. It is difficult to imagine how anything could be accomplished without one of the most valuable pedagogical language tools: questions. Three uses of questions are particularly apparent: first, teachers get information and evaluate it; second, children get information; third, children get feedback on their work.

In the first instance, a teacher might get a group lesson about rows and columns going by saying:

T: The top row has what in it? What's the first thing in the top row, Meredith?

Given an inappropriate answer, the teacher might not want to say "No, that's wrong." Instead she might choose to help the child arrive at an appropriate answer by using a question. For example, in a lesson about squares, a child offers the answer *a record* to a question about things that are square. The teacher does not say "Records aren't square." Instead, she says

T: A record? What part of the record would be square?

By asking another question, she provides the student another chance to answer. By asking a question following a child's answer, the teacher may also evaluate the answer as not being acceptable:

T: What about saying 'round' to describe a record?

Children use questions to get information from teachers and from each other. This may involve getting totally new information, as when a child asks a teacher

How do you do this?

Interestingly, this request for information is only partially successful, as the teacher responds with her own question

Why don't you find out?

Children may also use questions to do other kinds of conversational work, such as getting someone to repeat something that they didn't hear, to rephrase something that they didn't understand, to be more specific or to elaborate more on something. In a scene on the videotape, Albert does not appear to have understood what Garnett has said, and his first *What?* has the effect of getting Garnett to repeat himself. This is in contrast to his second *What?*, which is a clear request for information. Similarly, in a later segment, Michael's *What?* is a request for Steven to specify something in an earlier utterance.

Questions are also used as a way of getting feedback from both teachers and peers on completed work. For example, a nursery school child might use a fairly direct question with a peer:

Isn't my batik pretty?

The strategies used for getting feedback from a teacher may be considerably less direct, ranging from a kindergarten child's question about a completed weaving:

Mrs. K., how do you like mine?

to a second grade child's combination of a directive and a statement:

Look, Miss B., I painted that.

to a third grade child's combination of a statement and a question:

This is my map and how do you like it?

All these speakers are clearly aware of the need for different language strategies in soliciting feedback from different people. In fact, one child spoke overtly about not wanting to brag, revealing an awareness of soliciting feedback as a special language function.

Requesting clarification, elaboration, specification . . . getting a turn to talk . . . getting information . . . getting feedback. It seems clear that knowing how to function effectively in school includes knowing how to accomplish tasks by using questions, and children regularly display this knowledge.

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION

This part of the discussion section examines each section of the tape and transcript; specific examples of questions are pulled out of the transcript.

Part 1—Question Forms and Question Functions

Children come into contact with questions in a variety of situations. Often they are asked to locate questions in books or workbooks or to supply the correct punctuation for sentences that are given. Sometimes there is explicit teaching about the form and function of questions. Other times, being able to identify a sentence that is a question will help a child to do a better job or have an easier job of reading the next sentence which might well be an answer. Sometimes children are chastised for not answering a question asked by an adult or for "answering back" instead of doing what they have been told. All of this can mislead us about what children know about questions—how often they effortlessly use them in conversations, even if they may not be able to do exercises or if they occasionally misunderstand or intentionally play with language.

The first segment of tape shows a group of students without their teacher, carrying out an assigned task. One child, Melissa, has been put in charge. During this segment many questions are asked. Because the children are using language so routinely and are so involved with the job and the attendant social matters, it is easy to overlook the complexity of their questioning strategies.

- "COMPLETE" VS. "INCOMPLETE" QUESTIONS.

Some of the incomplete questions could just as well have been completely formulated, but completeness is not always necessary or even desirable for communication to take place. For example, at the beginning of the segment, Melissa says:

'Scuse me. 'Scuse me, Adam—Have—have you found out what your . . . you . . . ?

Melissa has something specific in mind when she addresses this question to Adam; moreover, it is clear from Adam's response "No, but I found one thing." that he knows exactly what Melissa is asking about. If he hadn't understood, he probably would have requested some kind of clarification or repetition of her incomplete question.

There are other incomplete questions for which the "complete" version would seem superfluous or inappropriate. An example of this comes once again from Melissa:

Adam, could you please hold that, right there? *That right there?*

Presumably Melissa is repeating that part of the question that is most important for this context, so that a "complete" version might look like the preceding question. However, a complete repetition would clearly be redundant and unnecessary. The simple noun phrase and the rising intonation do the work successfully. Alternatively, *That right there?* may be a related but independent *separate* question, such that the thrust of the first question is the request for help, while the thrust of the second is the specification of what is to be held.

There are examples of incomplete questions that reveal the nature of language as a reflection of social interaction. Once again, in speaking to Adam, Melissa says:

But is it—D'you think that it's the thing that they're talking about?

Clearly, the question that might have been *But is it the thing that they're talking about?* is a lot more direct and gets immediately at the answer. However, Melissa chooses to reformulate her question as a request for an opinion. The result is a much more indirect and softened question, certainly less threatening than the thwarted first version. Viewed from another perspective, the second question also allows Adam's answer to be a matter of opinion rather than an absolute statement of fact. The question pushes Adam to take responsibility for his answer while allowing a safety valve. The second version may be more effective as a teaching tool, and the first version, had it been completed, might have been socially inappropriate.

Finally, there are examples of what might be called "incomplete" questions for which it is difficult to imagine or formulate a "complete" version. For example, when Melissa says:

Okay. Wait—let me put this down. Ann?

Ann simply says:

Yeah?

A "complete" version of this might be something like:

Yes, I am attending to you and I am waiting for you to say something more. Do you have something more to say?

Ann's *Yeah?* does all of the work that the above utterance would do and does so much more economically. There is really no need to suppose that there is a "complete" version of this question that is not being used.

So-called "incompleteness," then, clearly has a function. Furthermore, completeness cannot be strictly defined by form: a question that one might classify as "incomplete" from a formal point of view (e.g. words "missing" or in an unusual sequence) might be complete and satisfactory from a functional perspective.

• QUESTION TYPES

In the general discussion, we reviewed some of the structural features that characterize questions in English. This first section of the transcript offers some good examples of these features. Melissa's question:

Teddy, have you finished yours?

illustrates the subject-verb inversion that marks yes/no questions. As we pointed out, with some verbs (be, have, and so on) the simple inversion can take place. With others, such as *think* or *finish*, the inversion by itself results in what most people would agree are ungrammatical sentences, e.g.

You think that it's the thing. . .

*Think you that "it's the thing. . .

In these cases, the word *do* is inserted and the result is an acceptable question such as Melissa's

D'you think that it's the thing that they're talking about?

Earlier we noted that yes/no questions may be marked by a steady rise in the speaker's voice. The transcript notes this rise in Adam's question:

Did you two finish with one?

Finally, we pointed out that some questions are formed with particular words, WH words, as seen in Ann's utterance:

Why don't you bring it in the courtyard?

As questions have a variety of forms, they also have a variety of functions. The questions can get the addressee to confirm or disconfirm some piece of information, as when Melissa says:

I should open it up?

The speaker may get the addressee to say whether something in the question is true or not, as when Adam says:

Did you two finish with one?

The speaker may be asking the addressee to choose which of several things in the question is true or confirmed. In another example, one child asks:

Is this an inch or a millimeter?

Finally, the speaker may be trying to get specific information relevant to the question word used in the question, as in the following question:

Where is Teddy?

We can see that all of the functions mentioned here have in common a general function of obtaining information. However, as we mentioned earlier, question forms do not always accomplish questioning functions and some functions may be accomplished by questions, statements, or imperatives. In this piece of transcript Ann says:

Why don't you move it out?

and

Why don't you bring it in the courtyard?

and Melissa says:

Ann, could you please get me your tape measure?

and

Adam, could you please hold that, right there?

Although these look like questions from a formal standpoint, they function as requests for action or directives. In fact, in Melissa's first example we see an intonation pattern that differs from the usual gradual rise seen in yes/no questions. The utterance, therefore, has only some of the formal characteristics of questions. In a sense, the intonation pattern might be said to "betray" the fact that something other than yes/no questioning is going on.

Another example of this is Melissa's utterance:

I should open it up?

where a statement is being used as a yes/no question. Once again, we see a need to distinguish two levels of form, as the word order of the utterance is indeed that of a statement, while the intonation is clearly that of a question. However, it is not difficult to imagine how the same utterance, with all the formal characteristics of a statement, could be used to get information. Try saying it aloud to yourself:

I should open it up.

This tape segment shows that children are aware of the subtleties associated with the form and function of questions and are quite capable of maneuvering these subtleties to accomplish a variety of tasks with language.

Part 2—What: *Getting a Chance to Speak, Giving a Chance to Speak*

Participants in a conversation talk to each other, but usually only one participant talks at a time. *Who* is talking changes from one participant to the other, and *what* is being talked about may change as well. Questions and answers help to organize the who, when, and what of conversations. Questions can indicate what should be talked about next, and questions have completion points that can indicate when the next person should talk and who that next speaker might be.

In this discussion, we are particularly concerned with the use of questions in the school setting. For example, in large group lessons, the social roles of the teacher and the students may largely determine who talks when and for how long and what they talk about. For the most part, teach-

ers ask the questions, children answer, and teachers evaluate the answers. However, in other situations in school, like at lunch or while children are working together, the social roles differ and the features of conversation correspondingly change.

We have said that questions often direct the *what* of a conversation. In fact, one way to get a new topic into a conversation is to get someone to ask you about it. In this segment, David does precisely that, with his utterance:

You know what?

By using this question form, David forces the listener (in this case the teacher) to say *What?* David's utterance accomplishes two things: It forces the other participant to respond, and it gets David a turn to say whatever he wants.

The word *what* is used in three different ways in this segment: David uses it as an *unfronted* pronoun (*You know what?* vs. *What do you know?* with a fronted pronoun); the teacher uses it as a one-word question and as a question pronoun in the longer question *What do you mean?* In the teacher's one-word question and longer question, the intonation of the utterances is a falling one, while David's utterance ends with a high, rising intonation. This is the intonation that we have described for confirm/disconfirm questions, but we can see that an answer like *yes* or *no* to David's *You know what?* would clearly be inappropriate. Instead of confirming or disconfirming, the answerer asks for more information. The answerer tries to find out what is the *what* presumably in order to answer the question. In this case, the teacher wants to have the *what* specified, and we see that the intonation of her *What?* is the falling one that we have described for information questions. David supplies the information, thereby succeeding in getting a chance to talk about his ability to "call colors," a classroom job. Furthermore, he succeeds in getting the teacher to give him the chance. It is interesting to note the difference in meaning between David's unfronted *what* in

You know what?

and the fronted version:

What do you know?

This second question is a fairly straightforward information question (although it also may be heard as an exclamation: Well, what do you know!).

Although the overuse of expressions like *You know what?* can be annoying and often cliched, it is important to notice that they call on the same basic questioning forms and functions as do other expressions in the language. It is also important to notice that they apparently work in getting the addressee involved in the topic the speaker is bringing up.

Sometimes children David's age are described as engaging in egocentric speech—that is even when they are with other people, they seem to be talking more for themselves than to communicate with others. Close observations of children's language have called this into question in many respects. For example, the use (or maybe the overuse) of *You know what?* by so many nursery age children provides evidence for the socially centered communication that children engage in. Strategies similar to David's *You know what?* can also be found in adult speech. Utterances such as *You'll never guess who I saw yesterday*. . . or *You won't believe what he did*. . . can have

multiple functions as conversation openers and as ways of securing a turn to talk. One difference between child strategies and adult ones is that the latter generally seem to include specific reference to a person, place, object, or event. This is in contrast to the child's fairly vague *You know what?*

In the other segment of the tape in this section, Garnett uses a strategy similar to David's to give and get a turn at talk. By saying

If I told you what it was, you'd probably call me cuckoo.

he obliges Albert to request more information. In response, Albert uses two different kinds of *what*. The second one, with its falling intonation

What?

is indeed a request for information and has the meaning of *What is the name of the movie?* However, the first *what*, with its rising intonation

What?

clearly indicates that Albert has not heard or understood what Garnett has said and is requesting a repetition or a clarification.

It is interesting to note that both David and Garnett want to share information about *themselves*. In our culture it is considered impolite to talk about oneself excessively or without having been given an opportunity or invitation to do so by another. David and Garnett's awareness of this value may account for these ways in which they choose to get and give turns. Both children use strategies which put the other participants in the position of asking for more information, and it then becomes quite acceptable to talk about themselves when someone else initiates the topic.

One way to see if the issue of *talking about oneself* is relevant is to compare these conversational settings with others. In large group lessons or in other conversations in which one of the participants is not being discussed, different turn-taking strategies are used. Normally, it is not necessary for the teacher to "earn" or "buy" a turn to talk in a large group lesson—she simply takes a turn and does not feel compelled to use a strategy like *You know what?* to secure a turn.

Turn-taking procedures also seem to differ according to the topic and the setting as well as participant relationships. They may differ, too, according to age. While David and Garnett go about getting a turn in similar ways, Garnett's approach is clearly more indirect and riskier. David's *You know what?* will almost certainly be followed by a *What?*, but it is not so certain that Garnett's *If I told you what it was, you'd probably call me cuckoo* will be followed up. Garnett has clearly learned that indirectness can also be used to get a turn, while David repeats his *You know what?* until he gets the desired response. Nonetheless, David does show an awareness of the need for indirectness. Without that awareness, he might simply have started out with *I was pretty quick on the color calling*. Both children clearly exhibit subtle competence in conversation; both

demonstrate that they know how language can be used in a variety of ways in order to get what they want.

Part 3 – What Else Does What *Do?*

In the previous tape segment, Albert's uses of *What?* can be seen as two different types of requests contingent on what was said just before, but in different ways. The rising intonation type can be called a *request for repetition;* the falling intonation type might be called a *request for elaboration*. Questions other than *What?* can be used in both ways.

In this segment of the tape, Michael's falling intonation

What?

requests elaboration contingent on Steven's claim. Steven uses words, eye gaze, and pointing to elaborate just which *that* he figured out how to do. When Michael wants a repetition of how much Steven borrowed, he doesn't use *what*. Instead, Michael uses a non-fronted *how much* question to pinpoint exactly what he wants repeated. Furthermore, notice how far away the contingent utterance ("I just borrowed ten from it.") is, with a sentence of Steven's and a phrase of Michael's intervening:

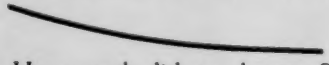
Steven: I may have—I just borrowed ten from it. I didn't borrow twelve.

Michael: Let's see . . . You borrowed how much?

There is also a difference between this non-fronted question and David's *You know what?* While we saw that David's question was a device to get a turn to talk, Michael's similarly formed question is a request for repetition. As with David's example, there is a strong difference in meaning between Michael's non-fronted question and the "fronted" version *How much did you borrow?* The latter could work if it had high intonation all the way through, that is:

How much did you borrow?

With the falling intonation of a regular information question, however, it would seem odd since Steven has just provided that information. Try saying it aloud:



How much did you borrow?

Steven's *Why not?* is also contingent on the previous utterance. But this is slightly different. The elaboration called for here is less specific; it is not in response to something indefinite in the previous utterance or to something remembered. It is nonetheless related to the previous utterance, but in a looser kind of relationship. *Why* and *how come* questions and their negatives are good ways to get someone to elaborate a topic. In some cases, though, they are inappropriate

(see Theoretical Framework for a discussion) and children's use of them is occasionally problematic.

Part 4—Other Ways What Works

In the last sequence, you will recognize some uses of *what* that have already been discussed. Mark uses two *what*s in the sequence:

Laura: I know what the last one is.

Mark: What? ↘

Laura: Brunch.

Mark: What? ↗

Laura: Brunch.

Mark: No.

The first, with falling intonation, requests elaboration on "the last one" that Laura mentioned. The second, with rising intonation, requests repetition of the word that was spoken at almost the same time as the first *what* and more than likely not heard. *What* also does work here that we have not seen before. It is used by Mark as a way to monitor the turns of his peers, as a way to control the flow of the conversation. He is obviously in charge of getting answers to questions, but the other children cannot put forth an answer until he has provided them a turn by saying *What?* The pattern established is the following:

Speaker 1: I know what (the last one) is.

Speaker 2: What?

Speaker 1: Answer.

Speaker 2: No (or yes, as the case may be).

The first child to speak may indicate that he or she has the answer but may not legitimately provide the answer until given the proper cue, the request for elaboration "what," in the falling intonation characteristic of requests for information. In a later example, once the pattern has been established and used, it seems to get simplified to using only a child's name to ask the question already on the floor, e.g. *"Gene?"* At this point, Mark's position as leader of the discussion and

the topic of guessing "the last one" have been established and there is no longer a need to go through the whole sequence. The crucial point here is that the lesson is characterized by the fact that a student has the responsibility for assigning turns. Mark's right to do so is not challenged. In fact, it is respected and followed. In this case, this allotment of turns is carried out by use of the question *What?* since the business at hand is to obtain information of a specific kind. While this assignment of turns to talk by one speaker in a conversation occurs rarely in everyday conversation, it frequently occurs in the teacher-led group lessons. Mark as teacher pro-tem not only clutches the sheet of questions and answers to his chest so his "students" can't see them, but he also uses an aspect of teacher language as a marker of his "teacher" role.

EXERCISES

The following set of exercises is divided into two sections. In the first one, the exercises are based directly on the tape and transcript. The second section consists of general exercises. In both sections, the exercises may be done independently or as assignments in either a workshop or a class setting. While the exercises may be adapted to different workshop or class formats, many of them are best done with pencil and paper and a tape recorder.

The general purpose of these exercises is to focus and refine your understanding of the topic at hand, both through *observation* and *discussion* of the tape segments and through *application* of what is learned from these observations and discussions. It is *not* the purpose of the exercises to elicit criticism of the behavior of the children or the teachers seen on the tape.

I. EXERCISES BASED ON TAPE AND TRANSCRIPT MATERIAL

A. Question Forms and Question Functions

(1) Listen to the talk on the tape or have someone read the transcript aloud. Count the number of questions. Then study the transcript itself and count the number of questions. Do the counts match? Compare your counts with someone else's. What do you think accounts for the difference in numbers? Talk about the criteria you used in listening as opposed to reading.

(2) Group the suspected questions into types based on their form—the formal properties. Group the same questions into types based on their use—the functional properties. What do these two groups have in common? In what ways are they different?

(3) List the utterances that meet each of the formal criteria. List the utterances that meet each of the functional criteria. Formulate explicit rules to identify utterances as questions on the basis of formal criteria. Make explicit rules to characterize utterances as questions on the basis of functional criteria.

(4) Are some of the questions incomplete? Are any of the incomplete utterances incomplete for their function? Does the incompleteness of any of the utterances influence their effectiveness in accomplishing their intended goal?

B. What: *Getting a Chance to Speak, Giving a Chance to Speak*

(1) List all the *whats* in both segments of this portion of the transcript. Notice the utterances where *what* is not at the beginning of the sentence. Try moving this *what* to the beginning of the sentence in which it occurs. Does it mean the same as when *what* is not fronted? How does

the meaning change? Think of ways to say the sentence without using *what*. "Something" is a word that will help. Do these alternatives mean the same as the original?

(2) What do David's and Garnett's sentences have in common regarding what they get the other person in the conversation to do? How are David's and Garnett's sentences different regarding their form? Can anything be said about the degree of specificity of these turn-taking strategies? Do adults ever use similar strategies? Give examples.

(3) How is the form of Albert's first *what* different than his second one and different than the teacher's *what*s? How is the function different?

(4) How is the function of Albert's *Bambi* like the function of his second *what?* It is a confirm/disconfirm question, but what is it contingent on in the previous utterance? (Consider the relation between children's peer value system and Bambi and saying someone is cuckoo, whereas Snow White doesn't matter!) Think about how Garnett and Albert reflect this value system by the language choices they make in their conversation.

C. *What Else Does* What *Do?*

(1) List all the questions. Group them according to the formal characteristics. Group them according to the functional characteristics.

(2) Find two requests for clarification—one a one-word question that requests elaboration and one a non-fronted WH question that requests repetition. What part or parts of the previous utterances are these requests for clarification contingent upon? Lengthen the one-word request for clarification using some words from the contingent utterance; likewise, shorten the other request for clarification by eliminating the words from the contingent utterance. Does this lengthening and shortening work? If not, why not?

(3) Collect 10 - 15 examples of the responses you get when you say *What?* in the course of everyday conversations. Practice changing the intonation for these *what*s and devise a system for marking the intonation. Record your examples on 3 x 5 cards:

A_1: (person participant is talking to) (utterance)
B : (participant) What?
A_2: (person participant is talking to) (utterance)

Record to whom you were talking and where. Indicate if the *What?* is due to *noise* interference.

(4) Describe:
- a) what the *what* is doing in these examples,
- b) if utterance A_1 differs from utterance A_2, and
- c) how utterance A_1 differs from A_2.

Be sure to discuss the role of intonation, the conversational placement, the relationship of discussants, the appropriateness of using *what*, and any other factors which might affect the form and function of A_2.

D. Other Ways What Works

(1) List all the utterances in this section that use indefinite references that seem to require another person to request elaboration or more information. List the contingent responses that each gets. Find the request for repetition.

(2) Who is taking the "teacher's" part in this segment? There are several indications that one child is playing teacher. What are they? Remember to watch and listen to what is happening here.

II. GENERAL EXERCISES

(1) Situations in which questions commonly occur include:
- supermarkets or other stores, particularly ones in which the customer normally has contact with a salesperson,
- on public transportation,
- during telephone conversations, particularly at the beginning or at the end of a conversation.

Collect some examples of questions and responses occurring in these situations. These exchanges can be recorded on 3 x 5 cards noting where they occur and who is involved. Once a few have been collected:
- (a) try to group them according to what they look like,
- (b) try to decide what the speaker is trying to accomplish with a particular question, and
- (c) list two or three other things the speaker can say to accomplish the same thing done.

Be sure to include some examples of question forms even if it is clear that their functions are other than that of questioning.

(2) Look at the responses to the questions collected for #1. In what way do these responses provide evidence that some of these utterances that may *look* like questions may not *behave* like

questions? Make a list of the different functions that these utterances are accomplishing. In some instances you may have to make up a name for what seems to be happening. Were any non-verbal responses noticed? If so, try to describe them and how they work in unison with or in place of verbal responses.

(3) Choose three or four radio or television commercials and write down the questions that occur in them.

(a) What are the forms of the questions? Does the same form tend to re-occur in all the commercials; are there certain forms that don't occur?

(b) What kinds of work are the questions in commercials doing? For example, are they trying to get information? How do you explain your answers?

This exercise can be done substituting magazine or newspaper advertisements.

(4) Observe a classroom for 5-10 minutes during two or three different periods and write down all the questions that occur. Examine these questions using exercises 1-6 in section I.A. as guidelines.

(5) Look through a textbook and note the questions that occur. Compare this list to the list from exercise #3 or #4 above. Are there question forms that occur in one that don't occur in the other? Why do you think this is?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section is designed to give the reader a brief overview of some issues that have arisen as linguists have attempted to describe and understand the form and function of questions.

Language Relationships: Transformation

The first issue concerns the formal aspects of questions and the relationship between questions and other language structures. For example, you will recall that in the general discussion, we drew attention to the difference between the sentence

Dinner will be ready.

from which the question

Will dinner be ready?

can be formed by subject-verb inversion, and the sentence

You sing well.

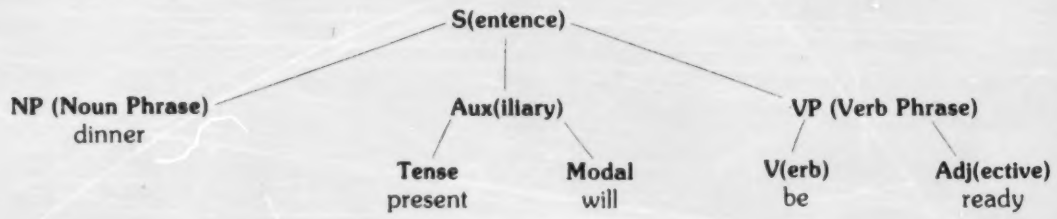
for which the question cannot be

Sing you well?

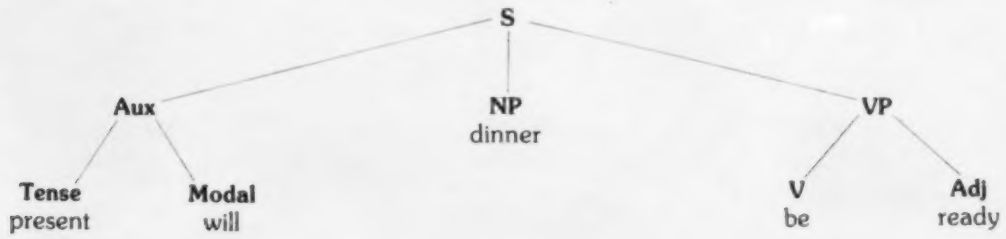
but rather

Do you sing well?

One way to account for the formation of these questions is to assume that the declarative sentence and its question are intimately related, and that speakers operate with certain rules to get from the declarative to the question. One of these rules is the question transformation. Within the framework of transformational grammar as presented by Akmajian and Heny (1975), the sentence *Dinner will be ready.* might be said to have the following "underlying" structure:

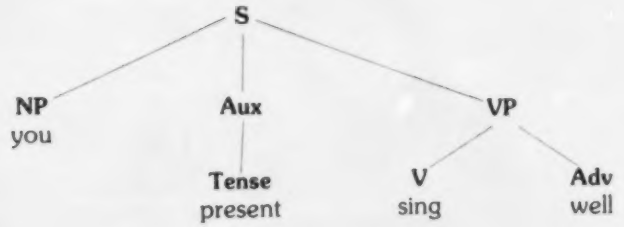


The question transformation requires that the tense marker and the auxiliary immediately to its right be moved to the left of the subject noun phrase (NP).

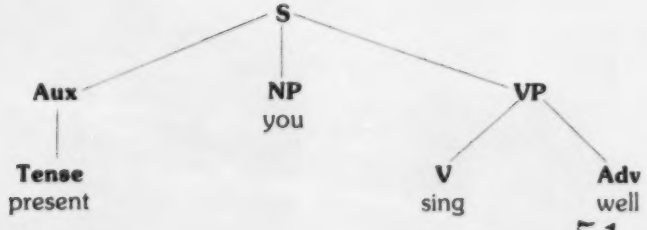


The result is the yes/no question *Will dinner be ready?*

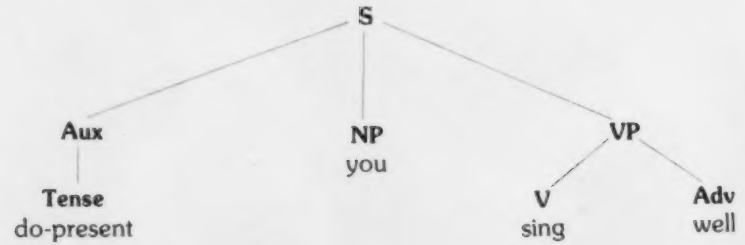
In contrast, the underlying structure for *You sing well.* shows no auxiliary immediately to the right of the tense marker that could be moved as in the previous example.



How can we end up with the correct yes/no question? The solution requires another rule known as *do-support*, which provides for the insertion of the verb *do* to the left of any tense marker that is not attached to a verb. With the sentence *You sing well*, the first step is to move the tense marker



and the next step is to attach *do*.

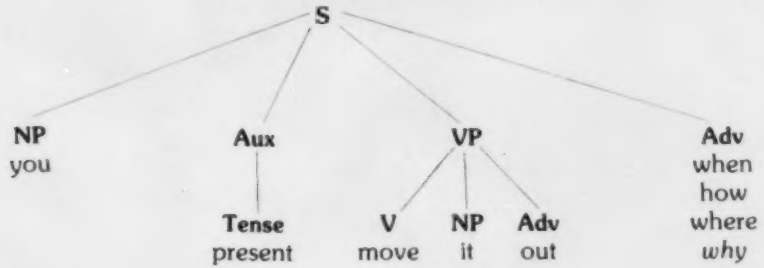


Following the operation of a (so-called) *spell-out* rule that derives *does* from *do-present*, the result is the yes/no question:

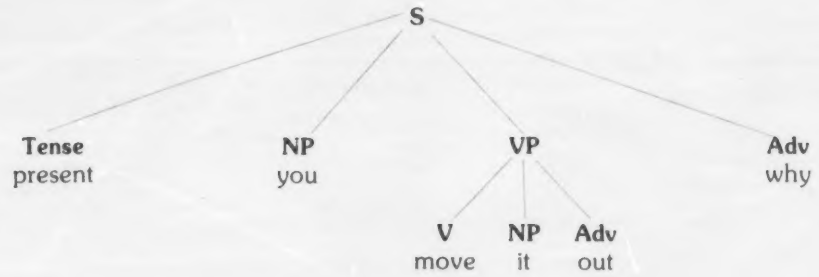
Do you sing well?

Turning to an example from our materials, Adam's question in the first segment *Did you two finish with one?* would be accounted for or *derived* in a similar way. But what about Ann's question *Why don't you move it out?*

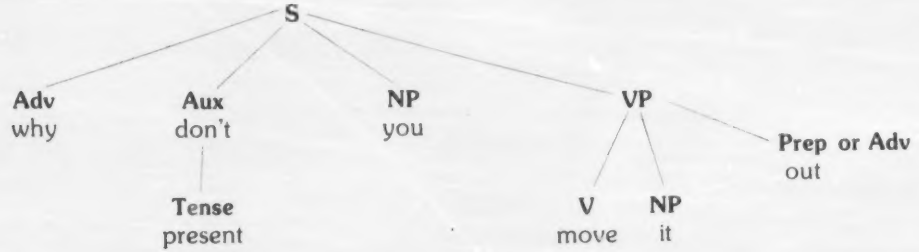
We discussed this question elsewhere as an example of a WH question. Again within this transformational framework, the WH words are accounted for as expansions of adverbs, parallel to adverbs such as *yesterday*, *for no reason*, *on foot*, or *in Paris*. The adverbs answer, in some sense, the questions raised by WH words. The underlying sentence structure of Ann's question is



In this case, the formation of a WH question takes place in several steps. The first involves the inversion of the subject NP and the tense marker, and it results in



As in the last example, there is no verb accompanying the tense marker, which means that *do* must be attached. In addition, in this particular sentence, a *negative insertion* rule would place *not* after *do*, and a *contraction* rule would account for the final result *don't*. The second step involves WH-fronting, whereby the adverbial word, in this case *why*, is moved to the very front of the sentence.



The result is Ann's question *Why don't you move it out?*

The approach taken by Akmajian and Heny is only one of several within the general transformational framework, but it will provide the reader with a basic view of how the formal or mechanical aspects of questions may be accounted for.

Language Relationships: Questions That Direct

A problem arises, however, because Ann is issuing an order, not asking a question—despite the many formal aspects of questions that her utterance has. There is further evidence for this in the utterance immediately following: *You better take that in the courtyard, like Miss C. said*. Ann is clearly not waiting for an answer to a question. She is trying to get Melissa to do something and has added some authority by referring to what Miss C. said.

Several linguists have addressed this issue by examining the apparent relationships between the form and function of utterances that look like questions but don't behave like them. For example, Gordon and Lakoff (1975) suggested that while utterances like Ann's *Why don't you move it out?* have the underlying structure of questions, they are understood as requests by virtue of certain conversational conventions. For instance, let's say that the speaker requests something of the hearer. It follows that the speaker

- wants the hearer to do the action requested,
- assumes that the hearer is both capable and willing to do it, and
- assumes that the hearer would not do the action in the absence of the request.

Gordon and Lakoff claim that a request can be accomplished by questioning any one of these three conditions. That is, the result of questioning the second condition (the hearer's ability to do something) with the utterance *Can you pass the salt?* is a request for the hearer to pass the salt. Similarly, the speaker can accomplish requests by questioning the reasonableness of an action. Thus, they might claim that Ann's utterance questions the reasonableness of moving some object into the courtyard. By so doing, she issues a directive.

Green (1975) re-examines these ideas and suggests that while it may seem intuitively correct to treat requests that look like questions as questions, they are fundamentally different from questions, which are defined as utterances that function to get information. She provides evidence to support this claim. For example, she contrasts

Why don't you cook dinner. It's 8:30.

with

Why aren't you cooking dinner? It's 8:30.

Green claims that the second utterance could have as an answer

Because the stove's broken.

"since sincere 'why' questions may be responded to with statements that give relatively direct reasons." She claims that such an answer would not be appropriate for the first utterance, and that "if someone responds to the first utterance with 'because the stove's broken,' he has taken the first utterance the wrong way." (Green 1975:128).

Both of these approaches are debatable. To get at the issue of utterances that look like questions but don't do questioning work, Sadock (1974) suggests that a distinction be made between meaning and use. He proposes that the process by which questions become requests is similar to the one by which metaphors become idioms: "When an idiom such as, say, *down in the dumps* was spontaneously created by some linguistic innovator, it had only its literal sense. By rules of inference that are perhaps of a universal nature, the metaphorical values of the phrase could be ar-

rived at. But the phrase eventually came to *mean* something that hitherto was only a metaphorical significance." (Sadock 1974:98) In this way, constructions such as *Why don't you . . .* or *Can you . . .* may have started out as information questions but by repeated usage in certain conversational contexts, acquired the meaning of requests. Why it is then that these particular forms are used repeatedly in certain contexts? How do these forms become what Sadock calls *speech act idioms?* Why, for example, does Ann say *Why don't you move it out?* as opposed to *Move it out?* The complete answer to these questions seems to lie in an understanding of the complexity of social interaction including such elements as politeness and indirectness.

Language Relationships: Requests for Clarification

We have seen how utterances that look like questions can be used as requests for action. There are other kinds of requests, however, including requests for repetition of some (part of) an ongoing conversation, requests for elaboration, or requests for clarification. For example, in the tape segment in which Steven and Michael are doing math, the following exchange occurs:

Steven: I did the top one. I figured out how to do that.

Michael: What?

Steven: The top one.

Michael's *What?* is marked by a clearly falling intonation. He is not sure about part of Steven's utterance and requests a clarification. That Steven understands Michael's *What?* as such a request for clarification is supported by the fact that he provides the information immediately.

These requests for clarification have been examined in detail by Christian and Tripp in a report to the Carnegie Corporation (1978). They define a request for clarification as "any utterance which can be intended as a strategy for getting clarification, from repetition of some information to addition of certain information." (Christian and Tripp 1978:12) They concentrated their analysis on the cases "where the request relates directly to the last utterance by the individual to whom the request is addressed." (p. 15) Requests for clarification signal some problem in the processing of an earlier utterance, either in accurately hearing or fully understanding it. The basic form of such a request is

Speaker X: utterance
Speaker Y: request for clarification
Speaker X: clarification
Speaker Y: response to X's first utterance.

Requests for clarification can occur in a variety of situations. For example, if an utterance is not heard, completely or in part, the information it contains will have to be provided again, with no

change, in whole or in part. If some background information needed to understand an utterance is not known by the speaker of the request, this information needs to be provided. If some aspect of the utterance is heard but is unclear, as in the case of a referent of a pronoun which is unknown to the speaker, certain further specification of that aspect is needed. Presumably, the *that* Steven uses is unclear or not specific enough.

Finally, some requests for clarification have the effect of eliciting reformulations. In a lesson situation, for example, children may respond to a request for clarification by changing the content of what they have said because they interpret the requests as a negative evaluation, however indirect.

Christian and Tripp describe requests for clarification in terms of (1) the structure of the request and (2) the way in which the previous utterance is being checked. The structure of the request is one of *nonconfirmation* if it asks for an information-providing response (e.g. Michael's *What?*).

Teacher: All my other classes have always called it the Ed and Edna game.

Ashley: *The what?*

Teacher: The Ed and Edna game.

Ashley: Oh.

It is one of *confirmation* if it requires the confirmation or rejection of some version of the information.

Paul: One, one, one, zero, zero

Ashley: *One, one, zero, zero?*

Paul: Yeah.

Ashley: It's only eleven hundred.

The previous utterance can be checked either by whole repetition, partial repetition, specification, or elaboration. Ashley's nonconfirmation request provides an example of a whole repetition, while her confirmation request shows a partial repetition. Michael's *What?* is an instance of specification. The following exchange is an example of a request for elaboration:

Ann: We need that!
Paul: *We need it on the rug?*
Ann: Yes.
Paul: Okay.

We pointed out earlier that Michael's *What?* has falling intonation. Michael's utterance is different from other instances of *What?*, such as Albert's in an earlier segment. Albert's utterance with rising intonation is a clear example of a request for repetition, which he obtains in Garnett's next utterance. The important role of intonation in determining meaning is striking, but perhaps more striking is the children's skill in using and understanding different intonation patterns for different communicative tasks.

Some recent work by Peters (1977) suggests that intonation may be one of the aspects of language controlled earliest by children, even before all of the forms are in place. Peters suggests that children may use two fundamentally different strategies when learning their first language. The *analytic* strategy, whereby the child proceeds "from the parts to the whole," consists of one-word utterances of one or two syllables. With the *gestalt* strategy, the child produces whole phrases or approximations of whole phrases. This gestalt phase is preceded by a "tune" phase in which a given phrase may be approximated by its characteristic intonation. The two strategies are further differentiated by social situation, "the strategy chosen for producing an utterance being related to the function of the utterance." Thus, the analytic strategy will appear in referential contexts, while the gestalt strategy is "used in more conversationally defined contexts," including openings, requests, or summonses. (Peters 1977:566) It is interesting to note that these observations are based on the speech of a child between the age of seven months and two years, three months—a considerably younger age sample than the school age children on the tape.

On the second segment of the tape we saw how David used the question *You know what?* to get a turn to talk. It is clear that David knows how to use this question in conversation, and he knows that other speakers will respond appropriately. The question itself is part of what might be called a conversational routine or tool to be used in special turn-taking situations. What is special here is that David wants to give himself a compliment and solicit praise from his teacher. It is not entirely appropriate to take a turn to do this, so he appropriately gets the teacher to request the very information he wants to present. The interesting thing is that the hearer's responsibility does not stop with providing a response to *You know what?* What may appear to be a two-part sequence is really a four-part one: having provided David a second turn, the teacher is also responsible for providing feedback on David's talk of his skill in color-calling.

There are other quasi-formulaic questions in English. Children's knowledge and use of these questions have been examined by a number of researchers, including Labov and Labov (1976), who investigated the acquisition of inversion in WH questions in their daughter's speech. They noticed that even though she appeared to have learned inversion in WH questions before inversion in yes/no questions, she still showed inconsistency in WH inversion long after she had acquired consistent use of inversion in yes/no questions. For example, the question

What the address is?

was produced on the same day as the question

Is there some on top of the cars?

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Furthermore, they noticed that contraction in the WH words *where* and *what* (e.g. *where's* and *what's*) encourages inversion, but that inversion rarely happened with *why* (e.g. Why we can't wear sandals for walking in the wood?). It gradually became clear that the *where's* and *what's* were not examples of inversion and contraction at all; rather, they were being used as formulaic expressions or fixed forms. The key to this explanation came from Jessie's early and frequent use of another question form, *How 'bout?*, which "begins as a vague kind of identification, but develops into clear requests for action" (Labov & Labov, 1976: 31-32):

> How 'bout daddy? (walking into father's study)
> How 'bout a boy? (looking at a picture of a family)
> How 'bout get ketchup? (to mother, eating French fries)

It seems clear that at a very early age, children show an awareness of and an emerging competence in both the forms and functions of language and how the forms are used to accomplish the wide range of communicative tasks we all face. It also seems apparent that the topic of the forms and functions of questions is large and complex and that this discussion is necessarily limited in its scope. Nevertheless, we hope that you have gained some insight on the diversity of theoretical approaches to and the intricacies of children's language abilities.

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GUIDELINES FOR TRANSCRIPTION

Several of the exercises in this manual require tape-recording and transcribing portions of conversation. The following are some basic guidelines for transcribing. A look at the transcript in this manual will also be useful.

(1) Decide how you will refer to each speaker, either by full name or by initial. Put this full name or initial in front of every new turn taken by that speaker.

Ann: Okay.
Melissa: Wait. Okay.
Ann: Measure—Do it again.

(2) In order to transcribe accurately everything a given speaker says, you may want to listen to a small segment, stop the tape, write down what you remember, and then listen to that segment again. Do not be surprised if what you *think* you hear and what is actually said are two different things. That is the reason for replaying difficult or quickly spoken segments. It may be helpful to listen to longer stretches on both sides of the troublesome sequence.

(3) Sometimes two people start talking at once, or one person interrupts another. This is usually shown in transcription with brackets marking the overlapping section:

Melissa: It's [as far out as] it can go.
Ann: [No, it might not be]

It is, of course, often difficult to hear what either speaker is saying in a case of overlap. As you can note, the continuing utterance of the person who keeps on talking after the overlap should be transcribed.

(4) Sometimes it is simply impossible to hear or understand what someone has said. This is dealt with by using square brackets; sometimes the word *unintelligible* is also included.

T: I'm going to [unintelligible] I'm going to go over to the listening center.

In other cases, you may not be entirely sure about a given word or sequence. This can be indicated as follows:

Pupil: I think we're gonna have some fun.

It may sometimes be impossible to tell who is talking. This can be indicated as follows:

(Unknown Speaker): I don't think so.

(5) There may be some information concerning nonverbal behavior or pauses that you want to include in your transcript. Parenthesis can be used for this:

Albert: Bambi.
Garnett: (shakes head "no")
Albert: What?
T: [unintelligible] (pause) Who is Dan talking to?
Pupils: (raise hands)

TAPE TRANSCRIPT

T: How many people do not want tuna sandwiches? Hold your hands up. One, two . . . Do *not*.

Teachers Ask Kids Questions

T: Alright. How many people want one half only, tuna sandwiches.

Kids Ask Teachers Questions

Pupil: But why would you rather be an igloo if it's made out of ice than be in a tepee?

Pupil: Because [unintelligible] keeps it nice and warm and see, it melts the top.

Kids Ask Questions of Other Kids

Michael: Let's see — you borrowed how much?

Steven: Ten. I decided I'd borrow ten instead of twelve.

Michael: Nah.

Teaching and learning would be hard to imagine without some ways to ask questions. What does a question sound like or look like? That was one but how did you know it? If you were reading this, you might look for a question mark or a word beginning with WH. Hearing this, you probably noticed my voice rise in pitch at the end of the sentence. But you didn't answer that question. Why? Sometimes sentences have a question form but they don't act like questions and people hearing them don't respond to them in the same way they do to a question. The following piece of tape from a second grade classroom has forms that look like questions and some that act like questions.

Please remember, it is harder to look at tapes of really occurring activities than at tapes of actors presenting a performance. Remember, too, that the eye and ear of the video equipment emphasize certain things that might not be noticed if you were present in the classroom. Most important, remember these are only short examples and it is not reasonable to make judgments about the abilities or personalities of the teachers or students.

Questioning Forms and Questioning Functions

Melissa: 'Scuse me. 'Scuse me, Adam—Have—have you found out what your—you . . . ?

Adam: No, but I found one thing. I'm thinking of the particulars.

Melissa: But is it—D'you think that it's the thing that they're talking about?

Adam: No, but Connie said we had to all agree on the item that we found.

T: This is more than 3/4ths.

Melissa: Okay. Wait—let me put this down. Ann?

Ann: Yeah?

Ann: Why don't you move it out?
You better take that in the courtyard, like Miss C. said.
I'll help you take it out.

Melissa: There! There. It's good.
It's as far out as . . .

Ann: No, it might not be.

Melissa: Yeah, come on Ann. No, if only . . .

Ann: Why don't you bring it in the courtyard. 'Cause, remember Mrs. C. said so.

Melissa: Ann, could you please get me your tape measure?

Ann: Okay.

Melissa: Wait. Okay.

Ann: Measure—do it again. Do it again, Melissa.

Melissa: I should open it up?

Ann: Yeah.

Melissa: Hey I know, I'll get it in the middle.

Ann: Okay, open it.

Melissa: There.

Teddy: I wonder if this is 24.

Ann: Here.

Melissa: Teddy, have you finished yours?

Adam: I finished mine.

Melissa: Okay, then sit at the table, please, Adam.

Melissa: Here, let—let me go around with mine.

Ann: I'm gonna bend my inches down.

Melissa: Adam, could you please hold that, right there? That right there?

Ann: An' hold that, too.

Melissa: Yes, please. Oh, it doesn't fit.

Ann: And one of these . . .

Melissa: No, we gotta . . .

Ann: Yeah it'll work, it'll work.

Melissa: Okay, it's—no that's 25 . . .

Ann: It's 2 meters an, 20—an' 25 centimeters. It's 2 meters.

Melissa: Okay. Okay, Ann, next time you've gotta—Ann, try next time to do it yourself 'cause I'm not supposed to tell it out. Okay? But—but . . .

Ann: Yeah. But I helped you with mine.

Melissa: I know . . .

Adam: Did you two finish with one?

Ann: No.

Melissa: Two. So that was two twenty-five. But you don't write that down 'til you find out when you're on your next one, okay?

What: Getting a Chance to Speak, Giving a Chance to Speak

WH words, as mentioned earlier, are familiar signals of questions. In this next section, a series of tape excerpts focuses on one such WH word: WHAT.

Nursery at Lunch

David: Hey, you know what?

T: What?

David: You know what? Hey, wait a second, you know what?

T: What, David?

David: I was pretty quick on this.

T: You were?

David: On the color calling.

T: What do you mean?

David: You know, like, I called every color fast.

T: You did!

David: (nods)

T: Do you remember the colors you called?

David: Yeah.

T: Can you show me?

Third Graders at Work

Garnett: Well, I have to finish all my work this week if I wanna go . . . if I ha-, becau-, . . . if I . . . if I . . . wanna go to see the movie with my brother. If I told you what it was, you'd probably call me cuckoo.

Albert: What?

Garnett: If I told you what movie, I was going with, with my brother, you'd probably say I was cuckoo. And my mother.

Albert: Bambi.

Garnett: (shakes head no)

Albert: What?

Garnett: Snow White . . . and the 7 Dwarfs.

Albert: It doesn't matter.

What Else Does* What *Do?

Grade Two—Math

Michael: twenty-five

Steven: How do you like 'at? Is that good?

Michael: Two! Two! What are you doing over there?

Steven: I did the top one. I figured out how to do that.

Michael: What?

Steven: The top one.

Michael: Let me check that.

Steven: I may have—I just borrowed ten from it. I didn't borrow twelve.

Michael Let's see . . . You borrowed how much?

Steven: Ten. I decided I'd borrow ten instead of twelve.

Michael: Nah! It won't work.

Steven: Why not?

Michael: Cause, it won't work. You have to borrow a thousand.

Other Ways* What *Works

Grade One—Lesson

Mark: The next one's gonna be so easy.

Laura: What is it?

Ashley: What is it?

Mark: Cat.

Michael: 'A' that is the easiest one in the job.

Mark: The last one is pretty hard.

(Replay starts)

Laura: I know what the last one is. Brunch.

Mark: What?

Laura: Brunch.

Mark: What?

Laura: Brunch.

Mark: No.

Michael: I know what the last one is.

Mark: What?

Michael: Cream.

Mark: No. Gene.

Gene: Um, at.

Mark: Wait a second, what is at?

Michael: A, A. For at. A.

Laura: Cat.

Michael: Call, call is last . . .

(Replay stops)

Mark: No.

Laura: Brunch.

Mark: No.

Gene: Chocolate cream pie fell on your head.

Mark: No.